

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Eligibility/Enrollment

1. Who is eligible to be treated under the contract?

Any eligible enrolled Veteran within the VA Health Care System is eligible to be treated under this contract.

2. Do I have to be service connected to be eligible for care under the contract?

No, but you need to be enrolled in the VA.

3. How do I know if I am eligible to receive treatment under the contract?

You can check with your local VA Medical Center, or VA Outpatient Clinic. The telephone number for the Audie L. Murphy VA Medical Center is 210-616-8436, 210-616-8401, 210-616-8413 or you can call the VA Outpatient Clinics in Harlingen, Texas at telephone 956-366-4500 or McAllen, Texas at telephone 956-618-7100.

4. How can I become eligible to receive treatment under the contract?

In order to become eligible, you should enroll with the closest VA Medical Center or VA Outpatient clinic. You may also seek enrollment via the internet at: <http://www.va.gov/>

5. Are CHAMPVA patients, TRICARE patients, or VA family members eligible for treatment under this contract?

No. CHAMPVA and TRICARE enrollees are not covered under this contract nor are family members of Veterans. The only eligibility for this contract is “enrolled Veterans”.

Services/Care

6. What type of services will I be eligible for under the contract?

If eligible and enrolled, you will be able to receive inpatient hospital care in one of the VA contracted hospitals. You also can go to the emergency room for a medical emergency. You will be able to receive all diagnostic testing associated with the hospital stay or emergency room care. Care provided in the emergency room is only covered if it is a medical emergency. Non-emergent care in a VA contracted facility will not be paid by the VA.

7. Where am I eligible to obtain care under the contract?

Under the contract, enrolled Veterans can obtain emergency room care and inpatient hospital care from South Texas Health System hospitals (McAllen Medical Center and Edinburg Regional Medical Center) or Valley Baptist Medical Center at Brownsville or Harlingen. Inpatient mental health care will be available through Valley Baptist Medical Center in Brownsville or South Texas Behavioral Health Center in McAllen.

Admission/Discharge/Extended Care

8. What do I do if I need emergency care?

If an emergency should occur, call 911 or go to the nearest Emergency Room.

9. If it is not an emergency, how will I obtain hospital care under these contracts?

If you have a need for a hospital stay, your admission will be coordinated through the VA outpatient clinics at Harlingen or McAllen. All non-emergent hospitalization must be authorized in advance by the VA.

10. Who do I call to notify I was admitted to a contract hospital?

The contract hospital is responsible for notifying the VA within 24 hours (or the next business day) of your admission by calling Fee Services at 210-616-8436, 210-616-8401, 210-616-8413; or Utilization Management at 210-617-5300 ext. 17625, Monday through Friday 8:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.

11. Who do I call to receive follow-up care requested by the discharging physician?

Prior to your discharge from the hospital, a discharge planner will work closely with the VA Outpatient Clinics to plan your continuing care. Please take note that any non-VA outpatient care provided without prior VA authorization will not be considered for payment under the contract. You will be financially liable for any expenses incurred for unauthorized follow-up care. If you have further questions, you may contact a VA social worker at the Harlingen Outpatient at 956-752-0723 or the VA social worker at the McAllen Outpatient Clinic at 956-618-7137.

12. I need to have home health, physical therapy or inpatient rehabilitation services. Who is going to pay for these services?

The VA can pay for services if they have been pre-authorized. Should inpatient rehabilitation be needed, you may need to be transferred to the Audie L. Murphy VA Medical Center, in San Antonio; however, referrals must be initiated by a VA physician. Utilization Management can assist (210-617-5300 x17625). Social Work Service may also assist. The VA social worker for the Harlingen Outpatient Clinic can be reached at 956-752-0723, and the VA social worker for the McAllen Outpatient Clinic can be reached at 956-618-7137.

13. I was transported to the nearest hospital by ambulance and I asked to be taken to the contracted hospital. Will the VA pay for this?

Eligibility criteria will be governed under the Millennium Health Benefits Act or under any other appropriate Fee Basis authority. The VA will pay for services if you meet the eligibility criteria under the appropriate authority.

- 14. I called 911 Emergency Services and was evaluated by ambulance personnel but they did not transport me. Will I have to pay for those services or will it fall under the contract?**

Payment for non-transport ambulance evaluations does not fall under the provisions of this contract. However, other eligibility may apply and will be determined under the appropriate Fee Authority.

Pharmacy

- 15. Where do I fill my prescriptions after hours or on the weekend when I am discharged?**

*Acute medications, i.e. antibiotics, pain medications, etc., may be filled through the pharmacy contract with local HEB pharmacies. Please note, **emergency medications** are limited to formulary items only, and may be prescribed in quantities not to exceed five days. The VA Pharmacy will fill chronic medications (not urgently needed) on the next business day. **Please note that, the VA will not reimburse the Veteran for discharge medications filled by any other pharmacy.***

Billing/Insurance

- 16. What happens if I am billed by the contract hospital? Who is going to pay the bill?**

You should not be billed by the contract hospital. However, if this error occurs, the Veteran must contact the billing office at the contracted hospital. The hospital will review the claim under the contract and adjust the bill accordingly. Veterans covered under the contract should not pay for any pre-authorized care or emergency care authorized by the VA.

- 17. I went to a non-contract hospital. Who is going to pay the bill?**

The VA may be authorized to cover the cost of this care based on eligibility under the Millennium Health Benefits Act but only if care provided was for an emergency; or if covered under the appropriate Fee Basis authority. In such cases, either the Veteran or the medical facility providing the care must contact Fee Services within 72 hours of treatment at 210-616-8411 or 210-616-8403. Once the patient is stabilized, the Veteran is then transferred to a VA contracted hospital or VA medical center for further care.

- 18. What do I do if the hospital asks for my insurance information?**

*If you are authorized to receive VA contract health care, you can still provide the hospital with your insurance information. **However, it is important that you tell the hospital that you are being admitted under the VA contract. Be sure to take your VA ID card to the hospital.** The contract hospital should contact Fee Services at 210-616-8436, 210-616-8401, 210-616-8413, or Utilization Management at 210-617-5300 x17625, Monday through Friday 8:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. to validate the Veteran's eligibility and/or provide an authorization number if approved under the contract.*

- 19. What do I do if the hospital bills my insurance even though the VA sent me there under the contract? Is the VA going to pay the balance? How do I make sure that my insurance is reimbursed?**

*If the care was **authorized by the VA**, the VA will pay for care according to the contract. The contract hospital should not bill your insurance company. If that happens by mistake, you should contact your insurance company and inform them that the VA authorized your care for the billed services. Your insurance company will request reimbursement from the contract hospital.*

- 20. I have received a bill from the physicians who treated me while in the hospital. They say that the VA has not paid them and this was part of the contracted admission. How do I ensure payment is made properly?**

If that mistake occurs, you will need to notify the provider's billing office and inform them that you were treated under the established VA contract. The provider's office can call Fee Services at 210-616-8436, 210-616-8401, 210-616-8413 to validate the authorization for treatment and adjust the account appropriately.

- 21. The doctor who treated me in the hospital wants me to make an appointment for follow-up when I am discharged. Is the bill for the follow-up doctor's appointment covered under this contract?**

*If you had a **surgical procedure** while you were in the hospital, you are authorized one follow-up visit with the doctor; however, you cannot continue to be followed by the physician for more than one visit. (Some non-surgical hospital stays may be authorized for one but only one follow-up outpatient visit). Your care will then be transferred to a VA physician. You should contact your primary care provider or the social worker at the Harlingen outpatient clinic at 956-752-0723 or the social worker for the McAllen outpatient clinic at 956-618-7137.*

- 22. I paid the hospital or the doctor. I want to be reimbursed.**

Veterans should not be billed for medical care covered under the contract. If the Veteran is billed, the Veteran should contact the contract hospital and advise them to bill the VA. Once the bill is received from the hospital, the VA will pay the hospital appropriately. If the Veteran has already paid the hospital, he/she must obtain a refund from the contract hospital.

Information Sources

- 23. Is there a number that I can call or a website for more information?**

*The website for additional information is: <http://www.southtexas.va.gov/vcb/index.asp>
An additional phone number for questions is 1-877-752-0650.*